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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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Column Hits Senators Like Rocket

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By Drew Pearson

Sen. Bourke Hickenlooper rushed into the closed-door session of the Senate Space Committee the other day a bit late. In his hand was a column by Drew Pearson, and the Senator from Iowa had blood in his face.



Pearson

"There is a column by Drew Pearson saying the Russians went into space ahead of Gagarin. He names names and tells just what the Russians sent up. 'CIA says' this isn't so. What about it?"

Herbert Scoville, the space expert for Central Intelligence, was testifying when Hickenlooper broke in. He looked surprised. So did other members of the Committee. Hickenlooper seemed quite indignant. So was Sen. Tom Dodd, Connecticut, Democrat, whom this writer has described as the "Democratic Joe McCarthy."

"Pearson is a congenital liar," said Dodd. "Every President in the White House has denounced him. I wouldn't believe a word he says."

Sen. Bob Kerr of Oklahoma, Chairman, got impatient and tried to change the subject.

But Hickenlooper was not satisfied. He emphasized that the Pearson column had given the names of the Russian astronauts and the approximate dates in which they had attempted their space flights.

Scoville, when pressed by Hickenlooper for an explanation of the conflict between the Pearson column and the CIA's information, main-

tained that Yuri Gagarin had been the first Russian in space.

At one point Senator Willey of Wisconsin, Republican, complained that the discussion involved security and ought not to be talked about in haphazard fashion. Willey also complained that he couldn't hear.

Louder, Please!

"Get closer to the microphone!" he told Scoville. "I can't hear you."

"All the microphones are turned off for security reasons," said one of the committee clerks.

Willey was moved up closer to Scoville so he could hear.

"Unfortunately," said Sen. Steve Young of Ohio, "I haven't read the article. What troubles me is that the CIA has been making this taking. Here are some definite assertions by Pearson. There must be some basis for these assertions. Do you say that the Soviet Union never preceded the Gagarin flight, put a man in space?"

Scoville repeated that Gagarin was the first space man. Young asked whether others at the CIA might have different information. Scoville insisted that they would testify as he had.

Hickenlooper continued to pursue the subject. He indicated that something ought to be done about Pearson. Finally, Senator Magnuson of Washington entered the discussion, pointing out that the Pearson article was somewhat speculative and did not report as an absolute fact that other Russians had earlier been launched into space.

"Isn't it possible that some attempts were made by the Russians to put a man into space prior to Gagarin's flight?" asked Kerr.

"Yes, it's possible," replied Scoville.

"Well, then, in this article," Hickenlooper asked, "you say that the Russians preceded the Gagarin flight, put a man in space?"

Not in Orbit

Scoville did not answer. Hickenlooper asked a question. "You say that the Russians preceded the Gagarin flight, put a man in space?"

The first was the World War II pilot, Alexei Leonov, who went up in a rocket in 1957 to an altitude of 200 miles and disappeared. The next was Terenty Shchennikov, who shot up in early 1958, but never came back. The next flight was attempted in January 1959 by Andrei Gromov. His rocket exploded 30 minutes after takeoff.

"None of these were attempts at orbiting around the earth," the column stated. "They were simply rocket rides, such as the first American astronaut will attempt next month."

There was, therefore, no conflict with Scoville's statement that Gagarin was the first Russian in orbit—even though the Space Committee did spend about 20 minutes over Hickenlooper's consternation.

Note—Most important revelation at the space meeting was the fact that the United States had taken TV photographs of Yuri Gagarin in his space capsule. He was only about 200 miles up and it was fairly easy for a U.S. satellite TV station to photograph him.

U.S. Guerrillas—Secretary of Defense McNamara will start developing a dead-end guerrilla warfare branch for the Army, equal to the Russian plan. The plan is to develop a corps of specialists in sabotage, bombings, arson, and other tactics. In turn will be sent to train guerrillas in other countries bordering the Iron and Bamboo curtains. The strategy is to turn Communist left forces into guerrillas. The same kind of move that the Reds have been making in Western nations. The idea is to show Moscow that we can play at the kind of game—in the Balkans, Hungary and even Russia.

Castro's Nightmare—A Castro shock bellowed to have tipped off Fidel Castro about the invasion. Castro's planes and tanks were waiting for the invaders when they hit the beach. The CIA never told the troops about the invasion and what beach they would land on until just before the landings. Yet when they got there, they walked right into a trap. Clearly, Castro let the men embark into landing craft and start putting supplies ashore before he opened up with all he had.

Crime Clean-up—Attorney General Kennedy will set up permanent racket squads to combat organized crime in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami. He has ordered U.S. attorneys to give priority to probing organized crime in Cleveland, Detroit, Newark, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Francisco and Tucson. Finally, Kennedy will form a 20-man mobile squad to move into any city where help is needed to prosecute the mobsters.

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